

DNA Testing

A consular officer may request genetic, or DNA, testing to establish a biological relationship in conjunction with either an immigrant visa application or a claim to United States citizenship through a U.S. citizen parent. While genetic testing may establish the validity of a parent-child relationship (and a sibling relationship through parent-child testing), such testing is **entirely voluntary** on the part of those for whom it may be recommended. A consular officer will not recommend direct sibling testing without parental testing. A consular officer will recommend genetic testing only when all other evidence is insufficient to credibly establish the biological relationship.

All costs of testing and related expenses must be borne by the persons being tested (the visa petitioner or beneficiary, or the U.S. citizen parent or child). Most fees will be paid directly to the laboratory processing the test samples; however, the embassy's panel physician will charge a separate fee for collecting samples for testing.

Any DNA testing for visa or citizenship purposes must be processed by a laboratory that is accredited by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB). Names of AABB accredited labs can be found on the AABB Accredited Relationship Facilities Web site:
http://www.aabb.org/Content/Accreditation/Parentage_Testing_Accreditation_Program/AABB_Accredited_Parentage_Testing_Laboratories/

For immigrant visa applications, the petitioner must select an AABB-accredited laboratory, contact the lab directly, and make the necessary arrangements for conducting the genetic test – including payment for all tested parties. For citizenship cases, the parent or child similarly must make all necessary arrangements and make all payments.

Under no circumstances should the immigrant visa petitioner or an individual involved in a claim to U.S. citizenship use third-party vendors to select their lab, arrange appointments, or transport the specimens outside of the lab chain-of-custody controls. The visa petitioner and citizenship claimant or parent must independently choose the lab to be used, make all required appointments, and go directly to the sample collection site. Under no circumstances should any of the parties to be tested directly receive test kits for themselves or for any other individuals to be tested.

Individuals residing overseas who will be tested will provide genetic specimens at the consular section of the United States Embassy in Nicosia. Collection of specimens will be accomplished by appointment. The AABB lab

selected to accomplish the testing will send test kits, including pre-paid, pre-addressed return envelopes and explicit sampling instructions, directly to the consular section.

Samples will be collected at the consular section by one of the embassy's panel physicians or by a member of the panel physician's medical staff or by a laboratory technician designated by the panel physician. Samples will be collected by buccal (cheek or mouth cavity) swab. Samples collected in this manner are easier to collect than blood draws, non-invasive, and painless

Collection of DNA samples at the Embassy will be witnessed by a consular officer or a United States citizen member of the consular staff. The witness will not collect samples himself or herself.

Persons providing DNA samples at the Embassy must come to the consular section promptly at the time scheduled for their appointment. The donors must bring with them their passport or other photo identification and a passport-size and type photograph of themselves. When instructed to do so by the consular witness, they must sign the back of their photograph.

In all phases of testing, communication of the results must be directly between consular officers and the AABB-accredited laboratory selected to perform the testing. AABB laboratories will send all test results directly to the consular sections in sealed envelopes. Consular personnel will **not** give copies of the DNA test results directly to any of the donors or to any other party. However, the U.S. Department of State has no objection to a donor receiving test results directly from the testing laboratory.

If you are requested to provide DNA samples and have questions, you may phone the embassy between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. any business day at 22-39-3939 and ask to be connected to the consular section. Members of the consular staff will do everything possible to answer your questions.